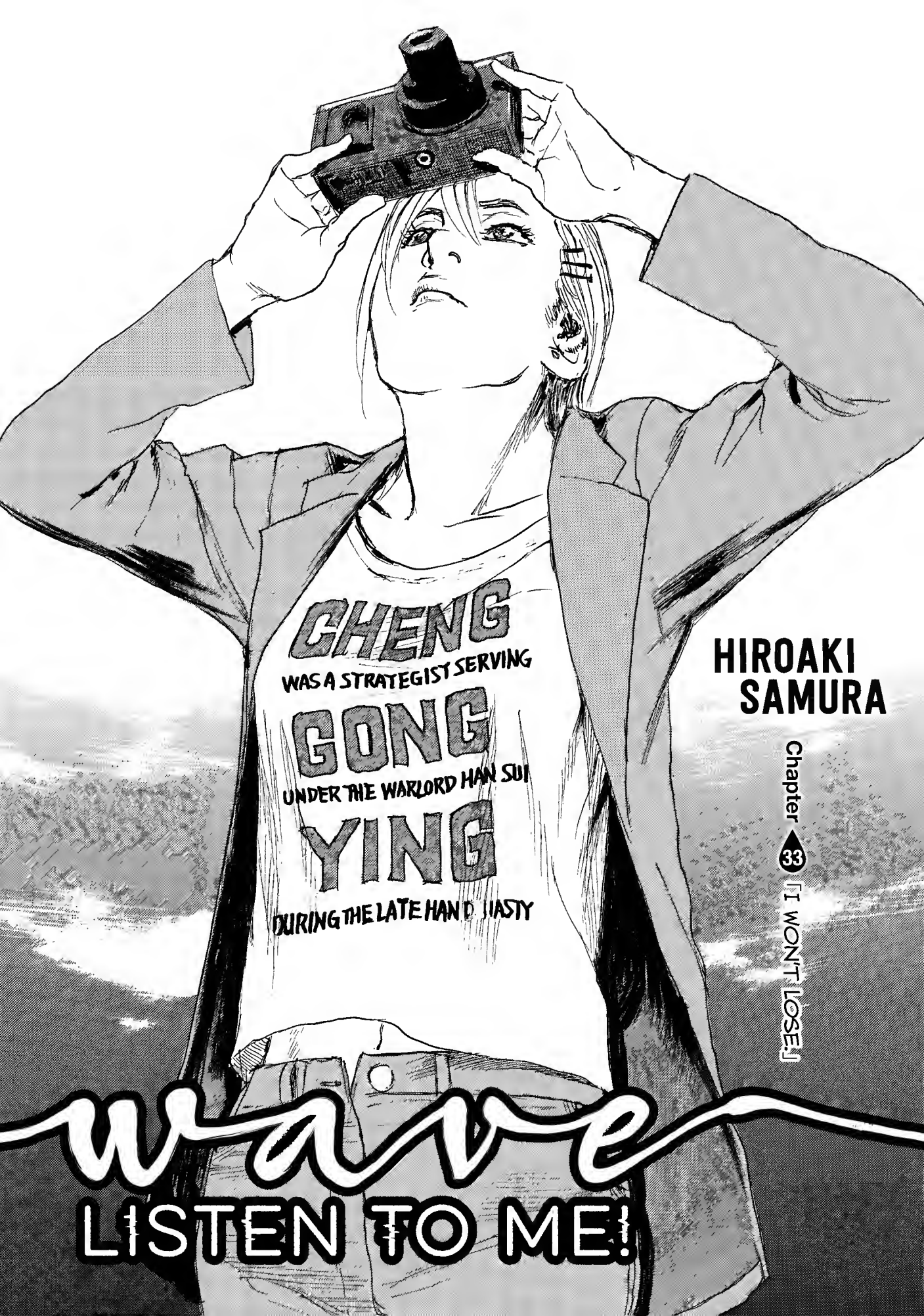
KODANSHA COMICS
33
CHENG
WAS A STRATEGIST SERVING
GONG
YING
wave
LISTEN TO ME!
HIROAKI SAMURA



wave
LISTEN TO ME!

HIROAKI SAMURA

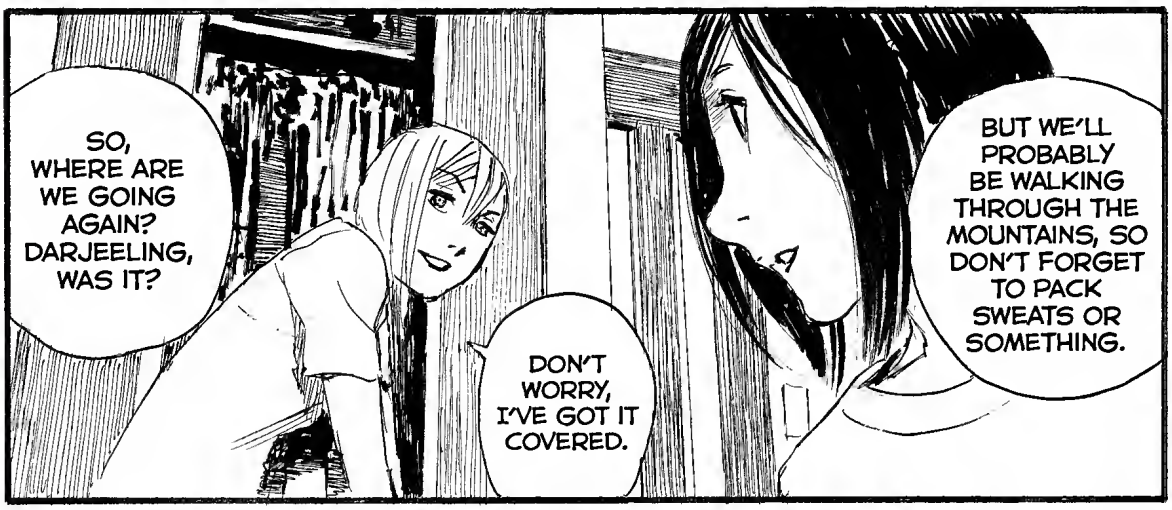
Chapter 33 「I WON'T LOSE.」

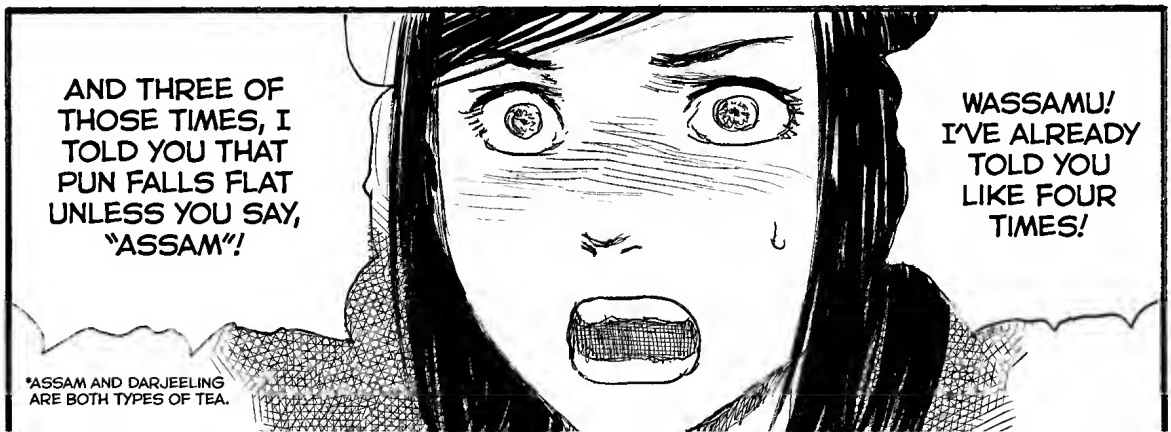
*THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION. ANY RESEMBLANCES TO REAL PEOPLE OR GROUPS IS PURELY COINCIDENTAL.

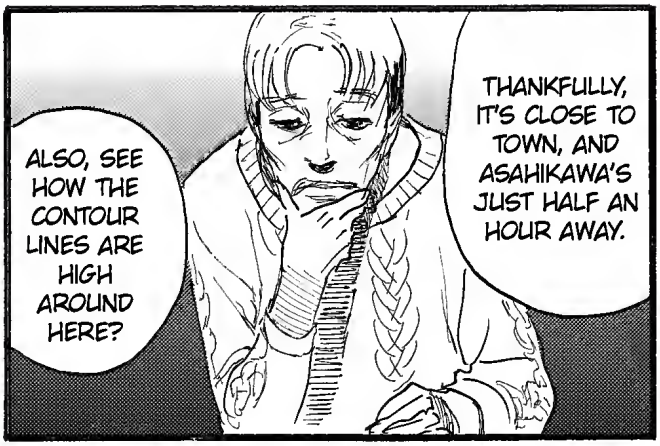
THE STORY SO FAR

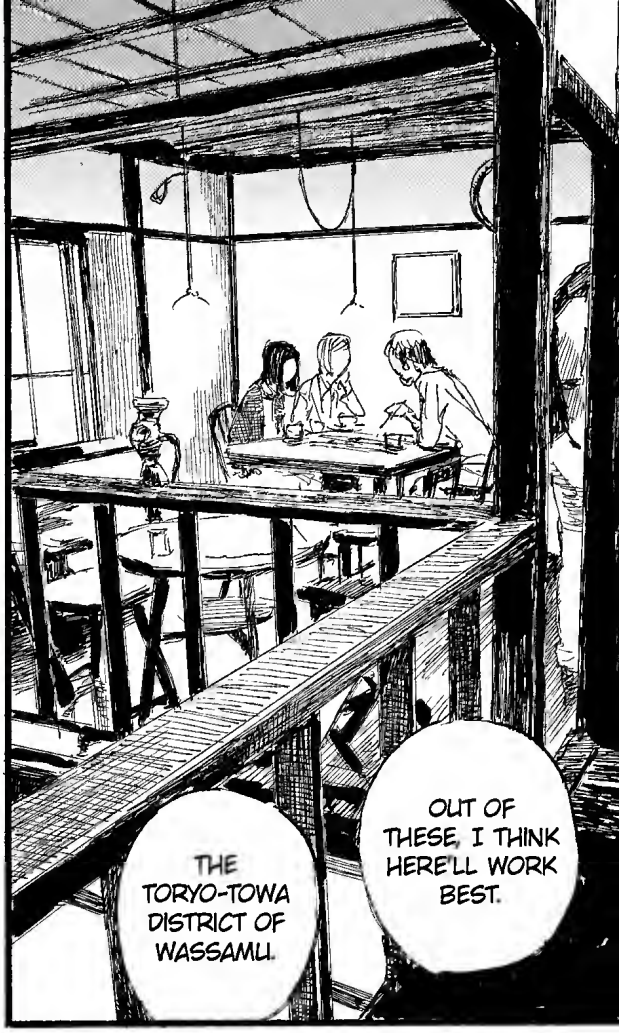
UNDER FM STATION WORKER MATO'S GUIDANCE, MINARE KODA HAS MADE HER DEBUT AS A RADIO DJ, AND WHILE ENCOUNTERING NONSTOP TWISTS AND TURNS, SOMEHOW MANAGES TO TAKE THINGS ONE SHOW AT A TIME. MEANWHILE, SCRIPT WRITER KUREKO MOVES TO MAKE A CAREER SHIFT AND BEGINS PLANNING A TRIP TO GATHER MATERIAL FOR A NEW BOOK, TO WHICH HIS SECRET ADMIRER, MIZUHO, VOLUNTEERS TO ACT AS HIS ASSISTANT. SOMEHOW, MINARE ENDS UP GOING WITH THEM TO RECORD THE WHOLE THING.

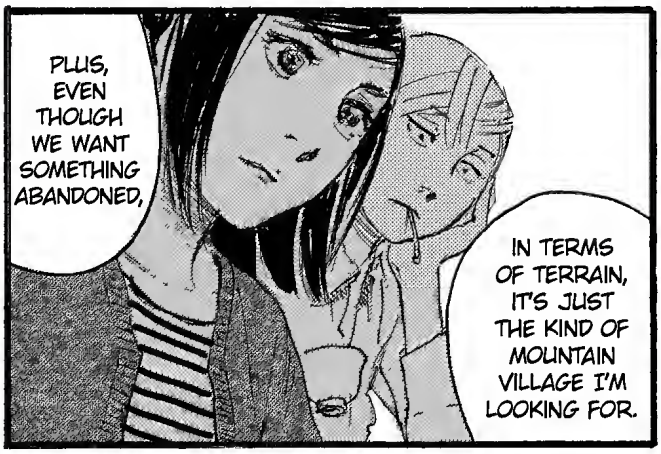
MINARE-SAN, DRESSING UP FOR THE TRIP IS FINE AND ALL,
NO MATTER WHAT I WEAR, THE ONLY ONES WHO'LL SEE ARE AN EROTIC NOVEL AUTHOR AND WOODLAND CRITTERS!
THIS IS BULLSHIT!

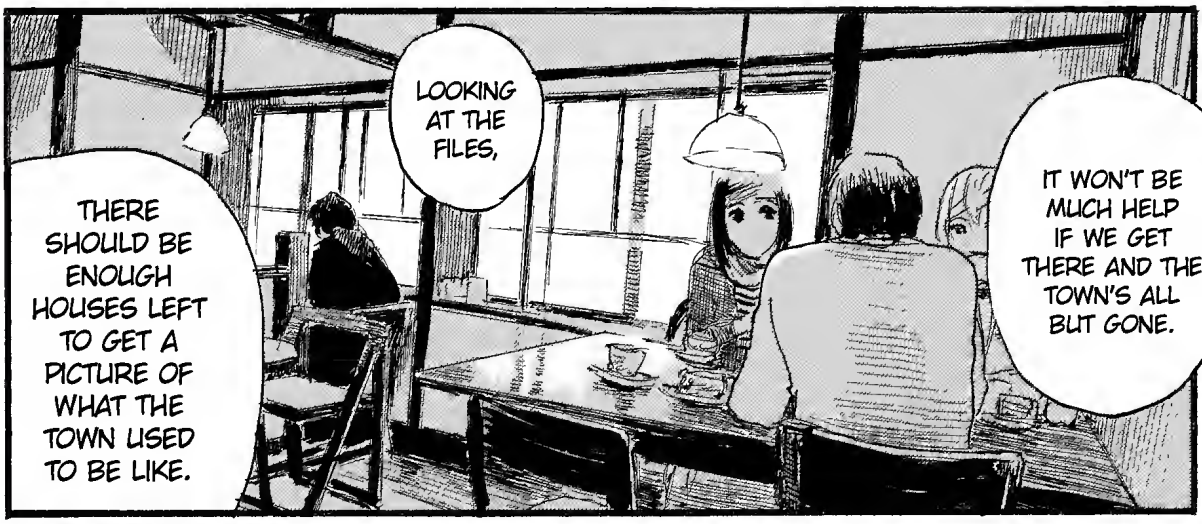

SO, WHERE ARE WE GOING AGAIN? DARJEELING, WAS IT?
DON'T WORRY, I'VE GOT IT COVERED.
BUT WE'LL PROBABLY BE WALKING THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS, SO DON'T FORGET TO PACK SWEATS OR SOMETHING.


AND THREE OF THOSE TIMES, I TOLD YOU THAT PUN FALLS FLAT UNLESS YOU SAY, "ASSAM"!
WASSAMU! I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOU LIKE FOUR TIMES!
*ASSAM AND DARJEELING ARE BOTH TYPES OF TEA.


THANKFULLY, IT'S CLOSE TO TOWN, AND ASAHIKAWA'S JUST HALF AN HOUR AWAY.
ALSO, SEE HOW THE CONTOUR LINES ARE HIGH AROUND HERE?


THE TORYO-TOWA DISTRICT OF WASSAMU.
OUT OF THESE, I THINK HERE'LL WORK BEST.


PLUS, EVEN THOUGH WE WANT SOMETHING ABANDONED,
IN TERMS OF TERRAIN, IT'S JUST THE KIND OF MOUNTAIN VILLAGE I'M LOOKING FOR.

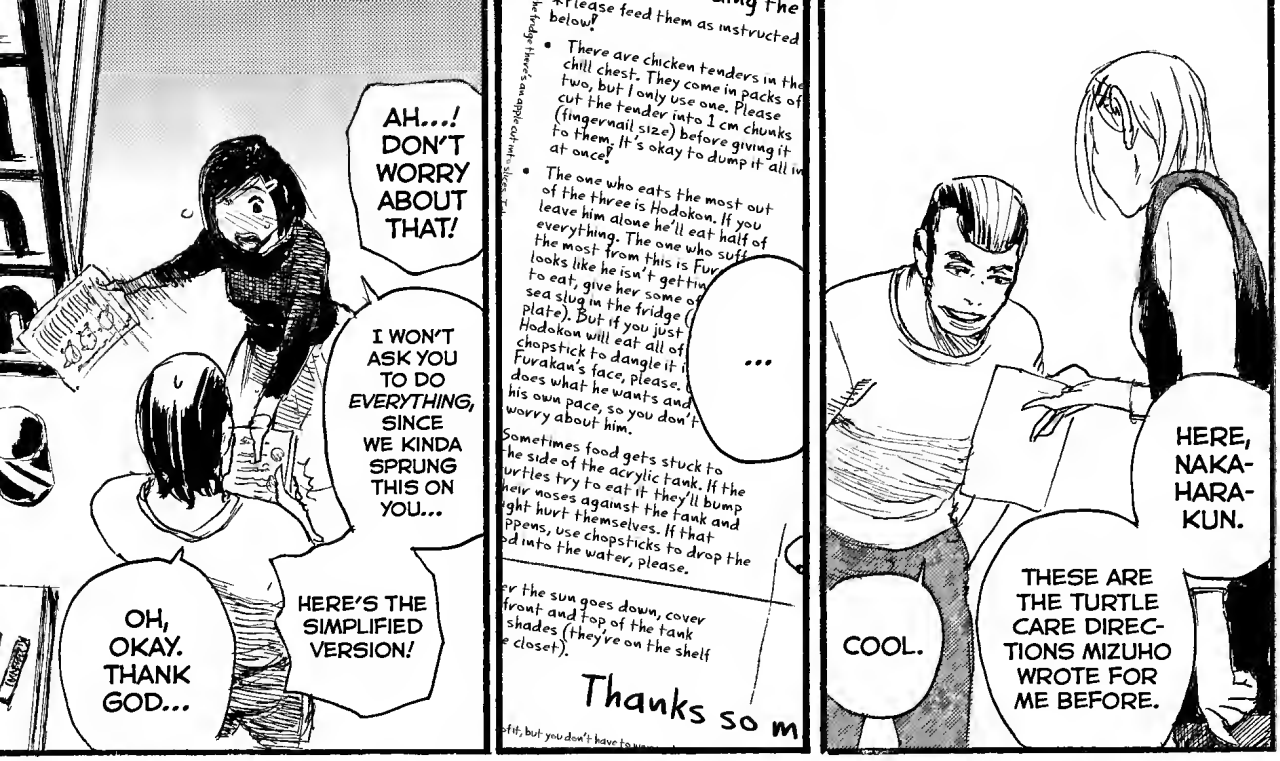

LOOKING AT THE FILES,
THERE SHOULD BE ENOUGH HOUSES LEFT TO GET A PICTURE OF WHAT THE TOWN USED TO BE LIKE.
IT WON'T BE MUCH HELP IF WE GET THERE AND THE TOWN'S ALL BUT GONE.

FOR SOME-ONE WHO'S SUPPOSEDLY BROKE, WHY DOES SHE BUY STUFF LIKE THAT?
IF YOU WANNA ROUGH IT ALONE, I WON'T STOP YOU.
I'VE BEEN WANTING TO USE THE HEIMPLANET TENT I BOUGHT LAST YEAR.
OH! LOOKS LIKE THERE'S A CAMPSITE AROUND THERE!

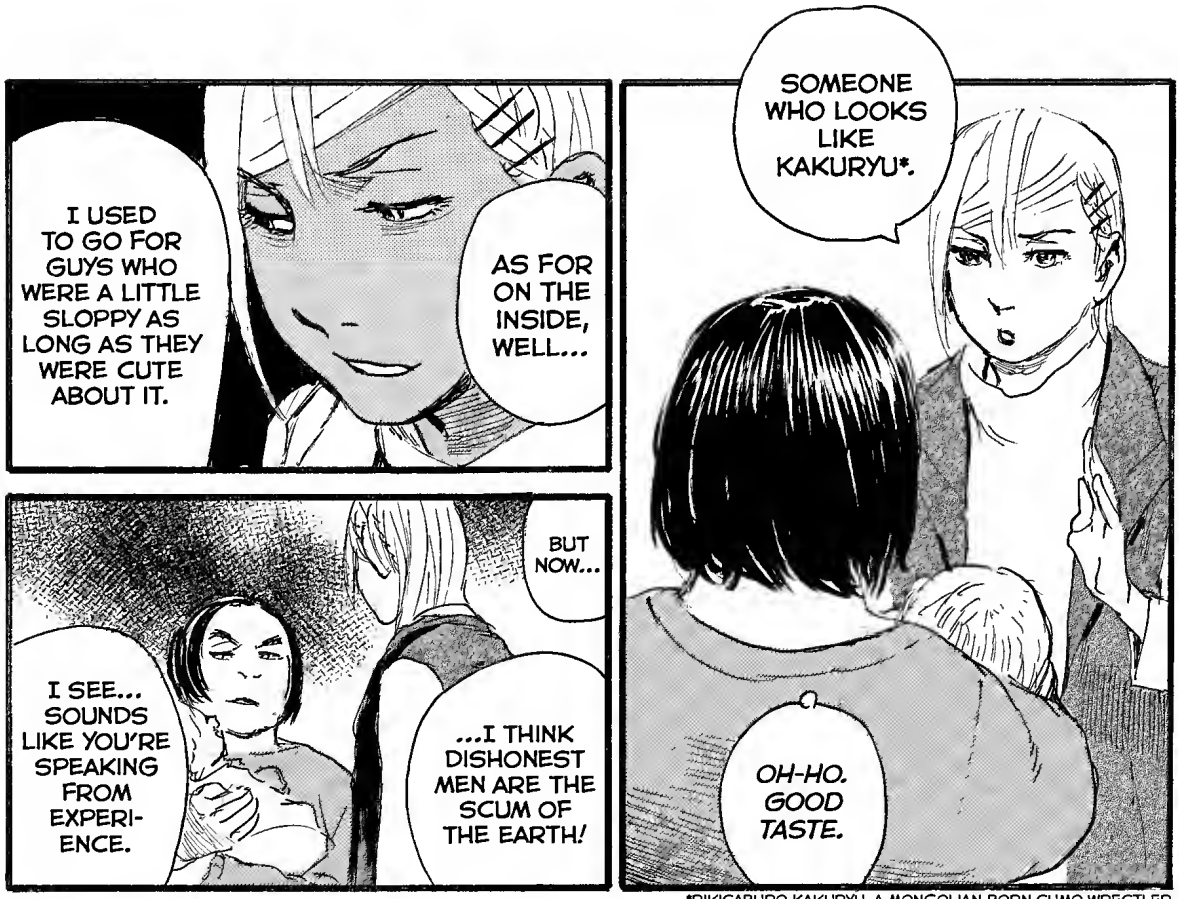
REALLY?
I SEE. WELL, THAT'S A PROBLEM...
OH, NOTHING. JUST TALKING TO MYSELF.
NO, IT'S FINE. TAKE IT EASY.
SAY HI TO UNCLE AND HIDE-CHAN FOR ME. OKAY, BYE.
TURTLE SITTERS FALL THROUGH?
OH... I DIDN'T GET A CHANCE TO ASK.
I GUESS THEY'RE GONNA BE VISITING SOME RELATIVES WHO RUN A HOT-SPRING INN IN NIIGATA.
UH-OH.
MUST BE NICE HAVING RELATIVES WITH PERKS LIKE THAT, THOUGH.
Anything for the woman I love.
WORRY NOT. JUST LEAVE IT TO ME.
HEY, NAKAHARA-KUN?
MIND IF I ASK YOU A FAVOR?
As Usual

HEY, GUYS.
SORRY TO ASK YOU THIS OUT OF THE BLUE.
HELLOOO.
turtle food

OH, FROM SOFUAN? I LOVE THAT STORE.
WE BROUGHT SOME TREATS FOR EVERY-ONE.
WHEW. TALK ABOUT DRESSING LIGHTLY...

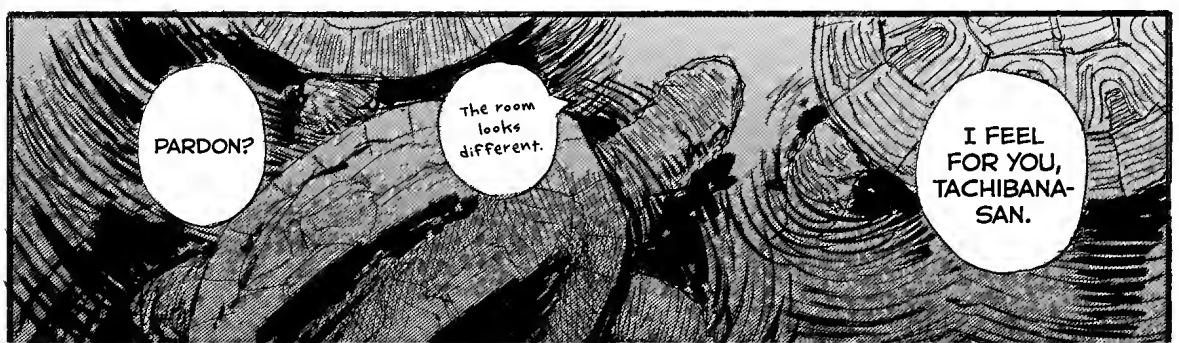

AH...! DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT!
I WON'T ASK YOU TO DO EVERYTHING, SINCE WE KINDA SPRUNG THIS ON YOU...
OH, OKAY. THANK GOD...
HERE'S THE SIMPLIFIED VERSION!
*Please feed them as instructed below!
• There are chicken tenders in the chill chest. They come in packs of two, but I only use one. Please cut the tender into 1 cm chunks (fingernail size) before giving it to them. It's okay to dump it all in at once!
• The one who eats the most out of the three is Hodokon. If you leave him alone he'll eat half of everything. The one who suff the most from this is Fur looks like he isn't getti to eat, give her some o sea slug in the fridge (plate). But if you just Hodokon will eat all of chopstick to dangle it i Furakan's face, please.
Sometimes food gets stuck to the side of the acrylic tank. If the turtles try to eat it they'll bump their noses against the tank and might hurt themselves. If that happens, use chopsticks to drop the food into the water, please.
Thanks so m
HERE, NAKA-HARA-KUN.
THESE ARE THE TURTLE CARE DIREC-TIONS MIZUHO WROTE FOR ME BEFORE.
COOL.

UMM. MEIKO-SAN, WAS IT?
IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU.
ARE YOU KODA-SAN? CHUUYA'S TOLD ME ALL ABOUT YOU.
IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, ASK AWAY.
...IT LOOKS IDENTI-CAL.
THIS IS KINDA RANDOM,
BUT WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A MAN, KODA-SAN?
OF WHAT?
...YEAH, I CAN SEE THE APPEAL.
?
HMM...

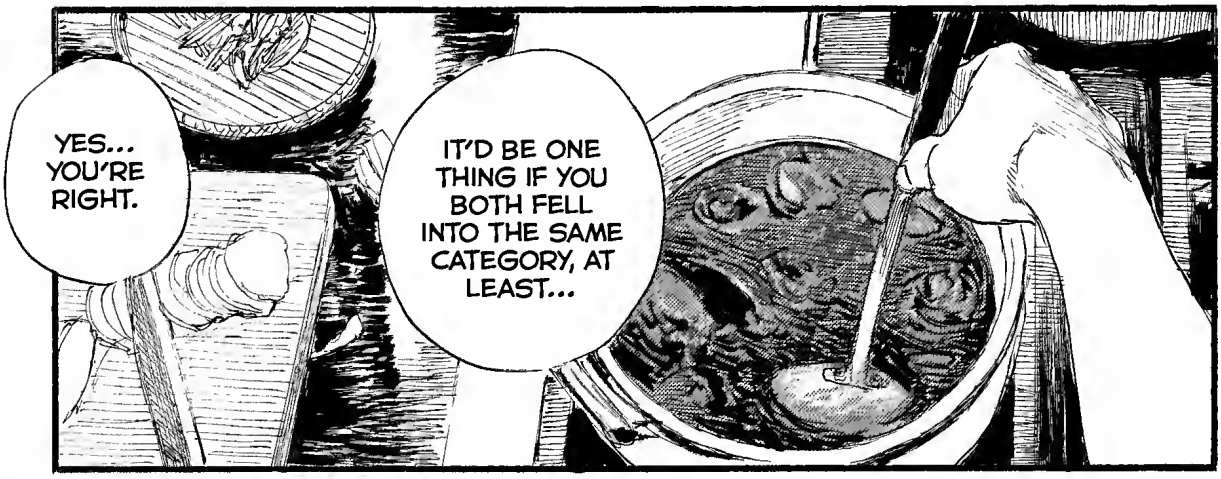

I USED TO GO FOR GUYS WHO WERE A LITTLE SLOPPY AS LONG AS THEY WERE CUTE ABOUT IT.
AS FOR ON THE INSIDE, WELL...
SOMEONE WHO LOOKS LIKE KAKURYU*.
OH-HO. GOOD TASTE.
BUT NOW...
I SEE... SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE SPEAKING FROM EXPERI-ENCE.
...I THINK DISHONEST MEN ARE THE SCUM OF THE EARTH!

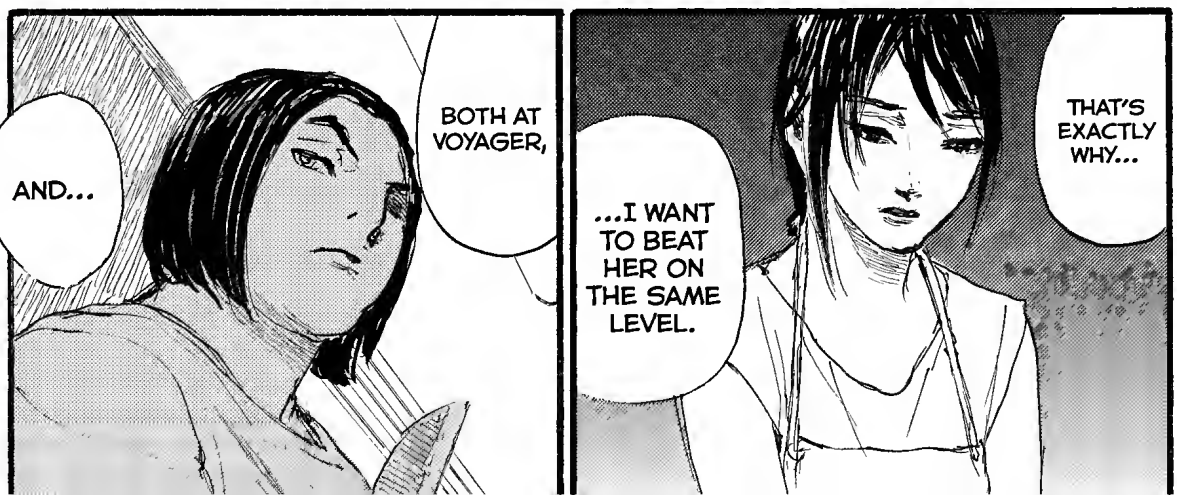
*RIKISABURO KAKURYU, A MONGOLIAN-BORN SUMO WRESTLER.

THANKS AGAIN FOR LOOKING AFTER THEM.
NO PROBLEM.
BRING THE FOLKS FROM THE STATION BY THE STORE AGAIN SOME-TIME.
WILL DO!
NO WAY. YOU BETTER COME BY YOURSELF, MIZUHO!
OR AT LEAST BRING FRIENDS WITHOUT TAINTED SOULS.



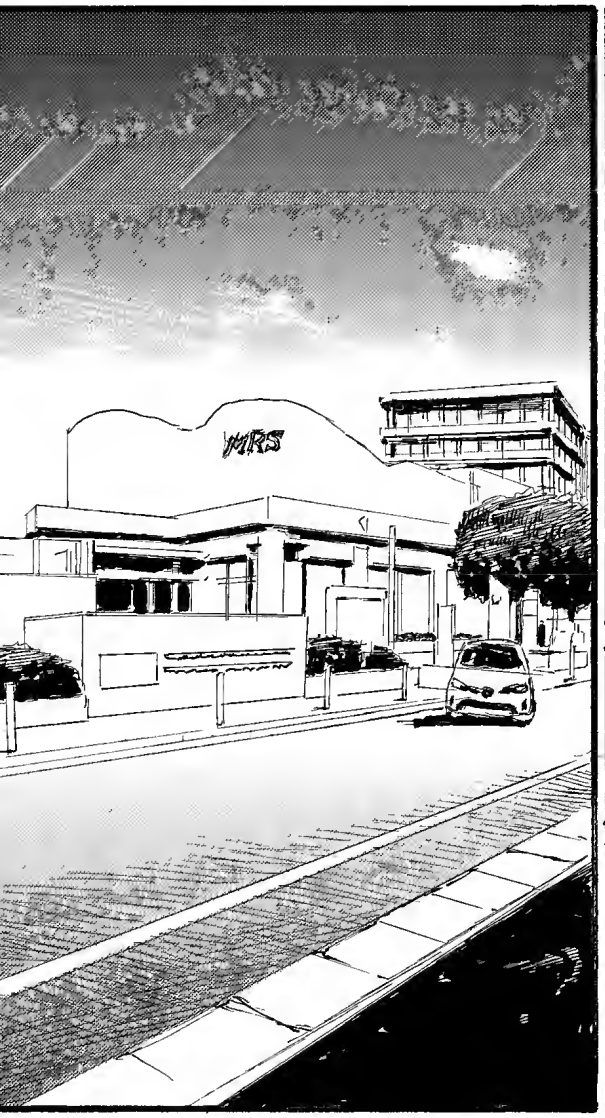
Hey, knock it off!
THAT GIRL LOOKS LIKE A TOUGH RIVAL.
...YES.


YES... YOU'RE RIGHT.
IT'D BE ONE THING IF YOU BOTH FELL INTO THE SAME CATEGORY, AT LEAST...


AND...
BOTH AT VOYAGER,
...I WANT TO BEAT HER ON THE SAME LEVEL.
THAT'S EXACTLY WHY...

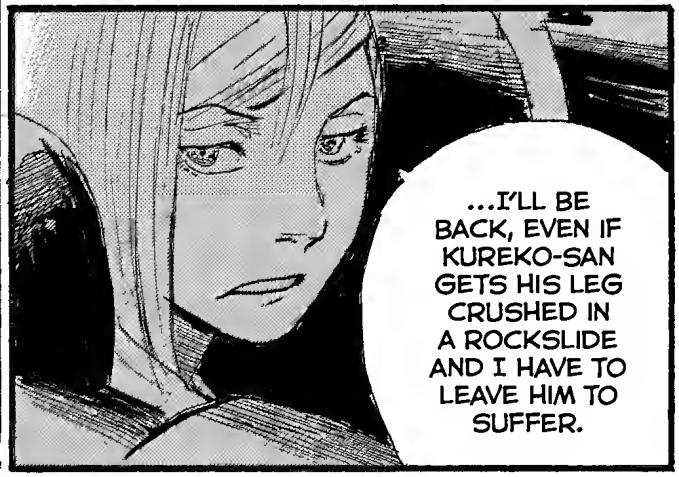
Desired order
1 Sapporo curry XXXX
Minare Koda
2 Sapporo curry
Makie Tachibana
3 Sapporo curry
Yoshiki Takarada
TAKE A LOOK AT THIS WHILE YOU'RE WAITING.
?
IS DINNER ALMOST READY?
I'M GONNA GO GRAB SOME BEER.
IT'LL BE ANOTHER 30 MINUTES.
MRS
I'LL BE FINE AS LONG AS I HAVE GPS ONCE WE TAKE THE WASSAMU EXIT OFF THE EXPRESSWAY.
NAH, YOU CAN TAKE THE BACK IF YOU WANT.
ALL RIGHT. I'LL RIDE SHOTGUN.

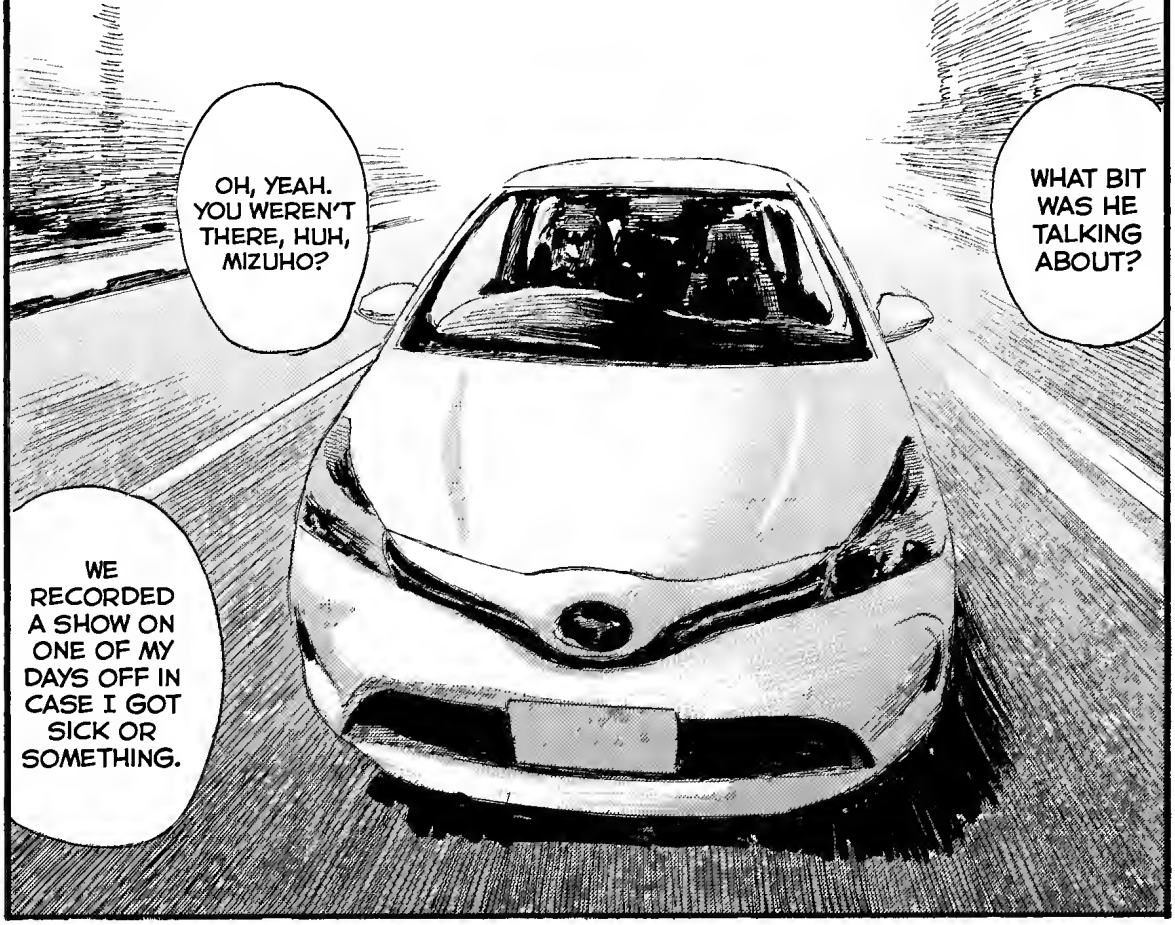
SURE. HAVE A GOOD TRIP.
MINARE.
WELL, WE'RE OFF.

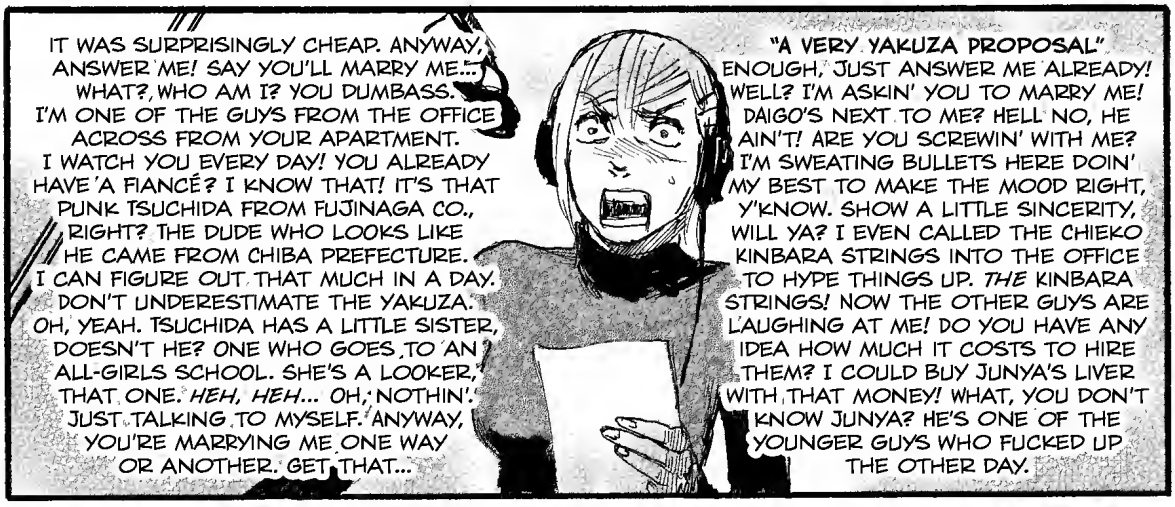

MRS

I'LL JUST PLAY THAT BIT WE WENT AHEAD AND RECORDED.

SUP?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT RUSHING BACK IF THINGS TAKE LONGER THAN PLANNED.

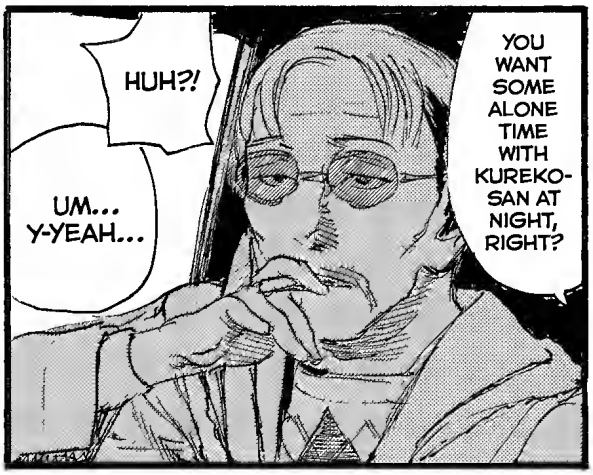

...I'LL BE BACK, EVEN IF KUREKO-SAN GETS HIS LEG CRUSHED IN A ROCKSLIDE AND I HAVE TO LEAVE HIM TO SUFFER.

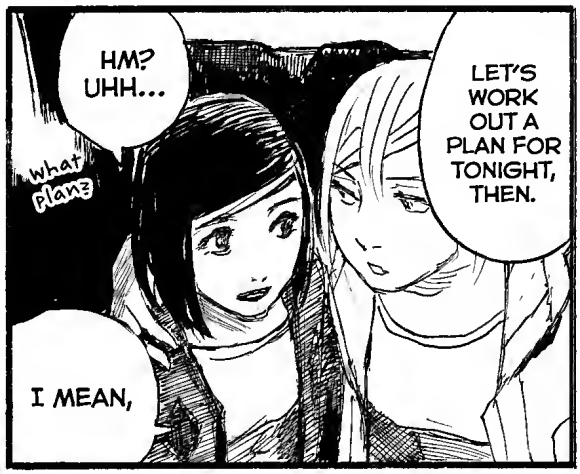

OH, YEAH. YOU WEREN'T THERE, HUH, MIZUHO?
WHAT BIT WAS HE TALKING ABOUT?
WE RECORDED A SHOW ON ONE OF MY DAYS OFF IN CASE I GOT SICK OR SOMETHING.


IT WAS SURPRISINGLY CHEAP. ANYWAY, ANSWER ME! SAY YOU'LL MARRY ME...
WHAT?, WHO AM I? YOU DUMBASS. I'M ONE OF THE GUYS FROM THE OFFICE ACROSS FROM YOUR APARTMENT. I WATCH YOU EVERY DAY! YOU ALREADY HAVE A FIANCÉ? I KNOW THAT! IT'S THAT PUNK TSUCHIDA FROM FUJINAGA CO., RIGHT? THE DUDE WHO LOOKS LIKE HE CAME FROM CHIBA PREFECTURE. I CAN FIGURE OUT THAT MUCH IN A DAY. DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE YAKUZA. OH, YEAH. TSUCHIDA HAS A LITTLE SISTER, DOESN'T HE? ONE WHO GOES TO AN ALL-GIRLS SCHOOL. SHE'S A LOOKER, THAT ONE. HEH, HEH... OH, NOTHIN'. JUST TALKING TO MYSELF. ANYWAY, YOU'RE MARRYING ME ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. GET THAT...
"A VERY YAKUZA PROPOSAL"
ENOUGH, JUST ANSWER ME ALREADY! WELL? I'M ASKIN' YOU TO MARRY ME! DAIGO'S NEXT TO ME? HELL NO, HE AIN'T! ARE YOU SCREWIN' WITH ME? I'M SWEATING BULLETS HERE DOIN' MY BEST TO MAKE THE MOOD RIGHT, Y'KNOW. SHOW A LITTLE SINCERITY, WILL YA? I EVEN CALLED THE CHIEKO KINBARA STRINGS INTO THE OFFICE TO HYPE THINGS UP. THE KINBARA STRINGS! NOW THE OTHER GUYS ARE LAUGHING AT ME! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH IT COSTS TO HIRE THEM? I COULD BUY JUNYA'S LIVER WITH THAT MONEY! WHAT, YOU DON'T KNOW JUNYA? HE'S ONE OF THE YOUNGER GUYS WHO FUCKED UP THE OTHER DAY.

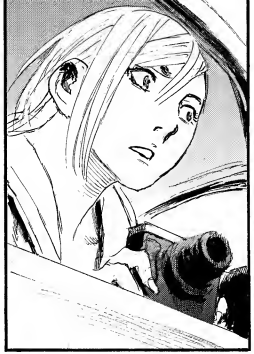
ANY-HOW, HEY, MIZUHO.
I WANNA DOUBLE-CHECK WHERE WE'RE STAYING TONIGHT...
OH, SURE.
ALL OF MY SHOWS ARE AWFUL, KUREKO-SAN...
SAR-CASM
SOUNDS NEAT!
THAT'S SOME AWFUL CONTENT.

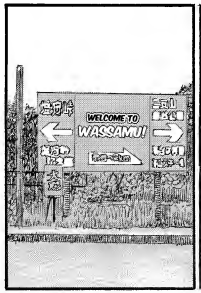
LET'S SEE... WE CHECK IN TO THE WBF GRANDE ASHIKAWA HOTEL AT 6.
SORRY, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO SHARE A ROOM, MINARE-SAN.
FINE BY ME. THAT'S PERFECT, ACTUALLY.


YOU WANT SOME ALONE TIME WITH KUREKO-SAN AT NIGHT, RIGHT?
HUH?!
UM... Y-YEAH...

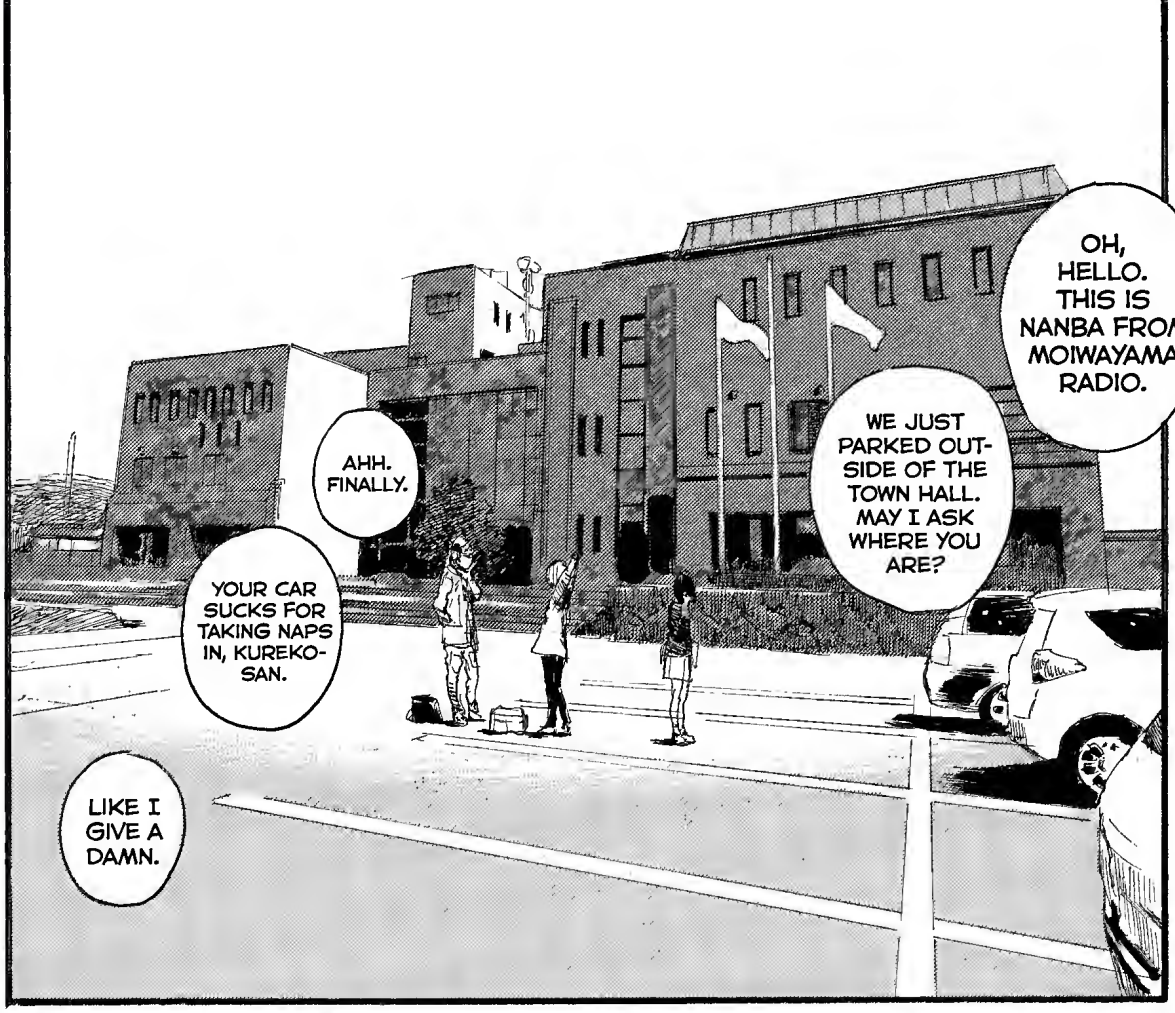

LET'S WORK OUT A PLAN FOR TONIGHT, THEN.
HM? UHH...
what plans
I MEAN,

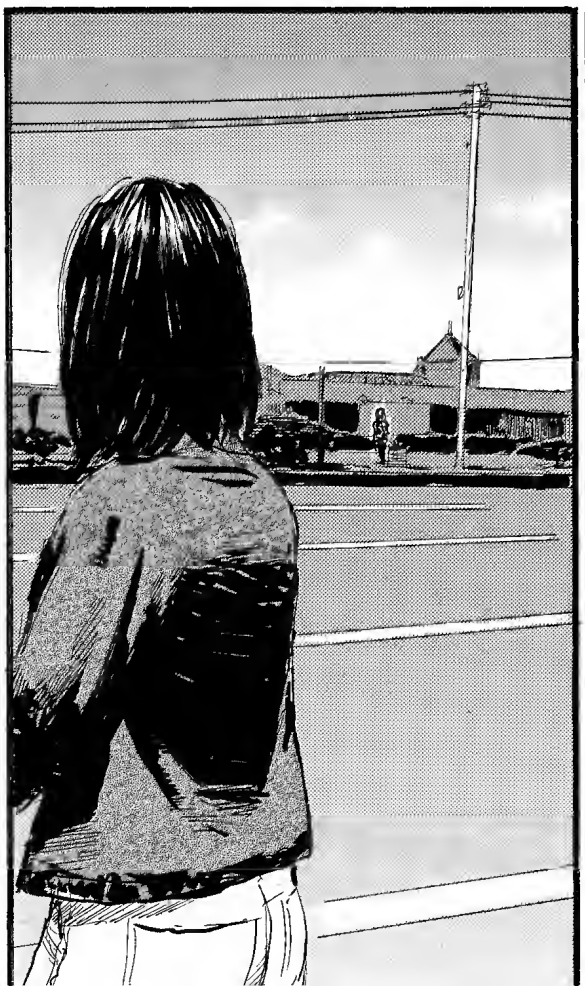
KUREKO-SAN'LL PROBABLY GO RIGHT TO BED AFTER HAVING A DRINK AT THE BAR, SO YOU SHOULD JOIN HIM AND STRIKE UP SOME CONVERSATION.
QUIT PUTTING WORDS IN MY MOUTH! WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "UM... Y-YEAH"?!
DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU TALK ABOUT. SEGMENTS ON BOOGIE-WOOGIE RADIO YOU THOUGHT WERE GOOD, ANYTHING...
MINARE-SAN!
THEN, NOT EVEN THE PERPETUALLY COOL KUREKO-SAN'LL BE ABLE TO PLAY DUMB AND INVITE YOU TO DRINK IN HIS ROOM.
AND WHEN YOU DO, IT JUST SO HAPPENS I'LL HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP WITH THE DOOR LOCKED! I'LL HANG ON TO THE KEY, OF COURSE.
THEN, COME BACK TO THE ROOM AFTER GETTING PLASTERED TOGETHER.





WASSAMU, KAMIKAWA SUBPREFECTURE


OH, HELLO. THIS IS NANBA FROM MOIWAYAMA RADIO.
WE JUST PARKED OUTSIDE OF THE TOWN HALL. MAY I ASK WHERE YOU ARE?
AHH. FINALLY.
YOUR CAR SUCKS FOR TAKING NAPS IN, KUREKO-SAN.
LIKE I GIVE A DAMN.

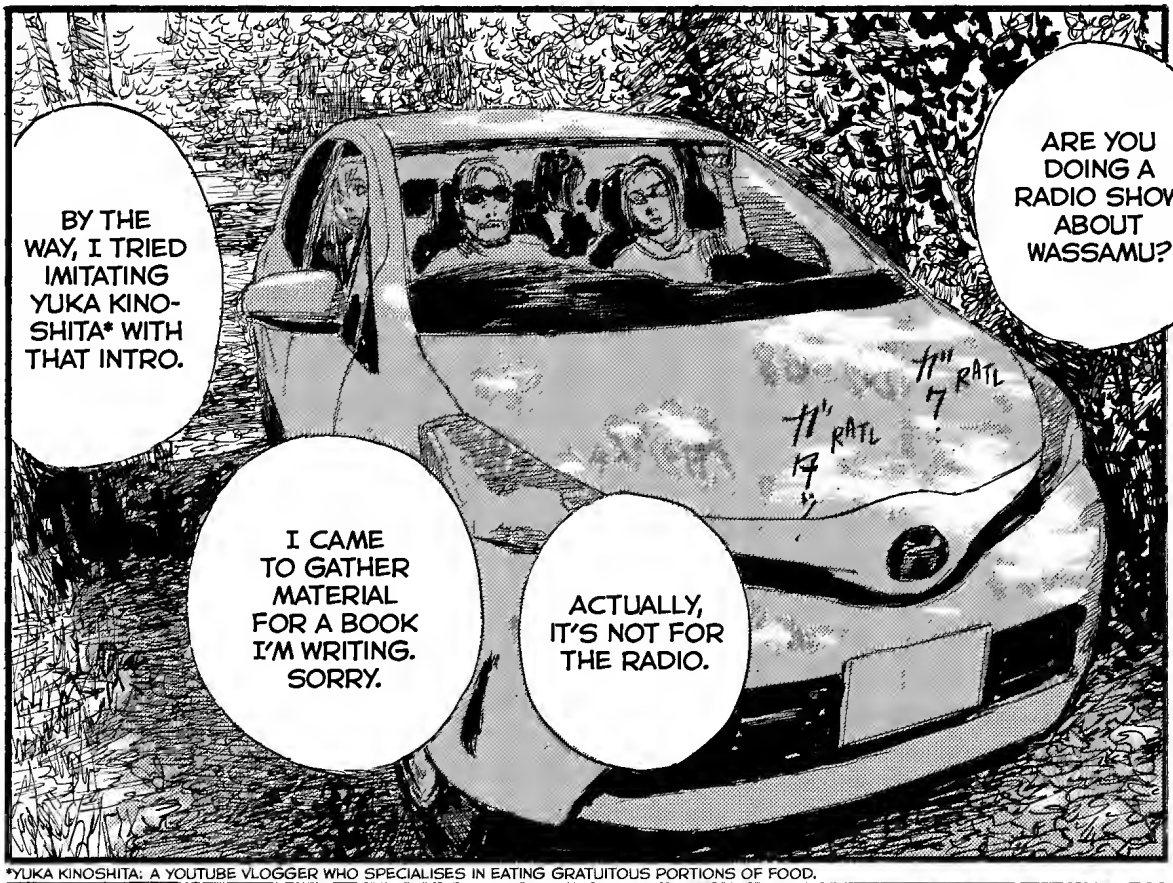


THE LIBRARY?
WHERE IS THE LIBRARY?
NO, WE'LL HEAD THAT WAY.

ACROSS THE STREET?!
OH, YOU CAN SEE US?!

HOWDY.
HELLO. THANKS FOR COMING OUT!
PACK-ING HEAT
HI, THERE.
MY NAME'S HOKAKUSHI. I'LL BE YOUR GUIDE TODAY.
OH, SURE.
IT'S A LARGE AREA, SO IF WE COULD NARROW DOWN OUR STOPS, THAT'D BE A BIG HELP.
I THOUGHT I'D COPY ONE OF THE OLD MAPS OF THE TORYO-TOWA AREA BEFORE WE HEAD OUT.

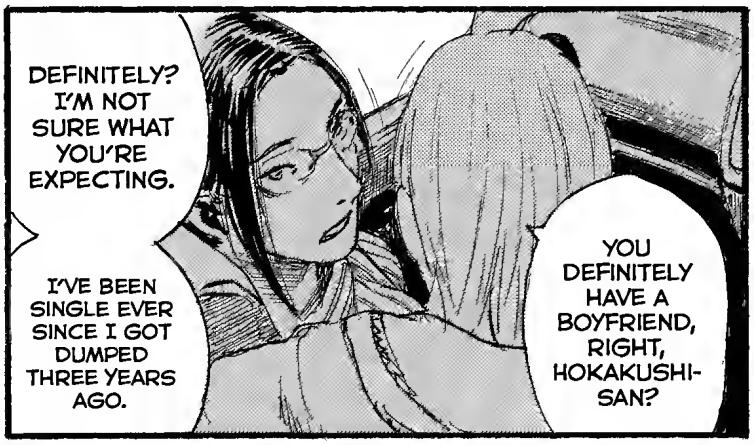
I'VE COME TO THE TORYO-TOWA AREA OF WASSAMU TO RESEARCH DEPOPULATED VILLAGES.
SO, TODAY,
GOOD EVENING, EVERYONE. WAVE, LISTEN TO ME'S MINARE KODA HERE.

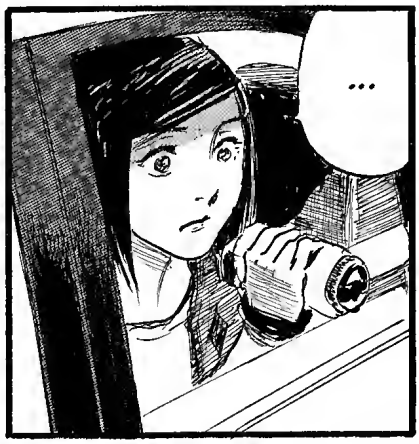

BY THE WAY, I TRIED IMITATING YUKA KINO-SHITA* WITH THAT INTRO.
I CAME TO GATHER MATERIAL FOR A BOOK I'M WRITING. SORRY.
ACTUALLY, IT'S NOT FOR THE RADIO.
ARE YOU DOING A RADIO SHOW ABOUT WASSAMU?

*YUKA KINOSHITA: A YOUTUBE VLOGGER WHO SPECIALISES IN EATING GRATUITOUS PORTIONS OF FOOD.

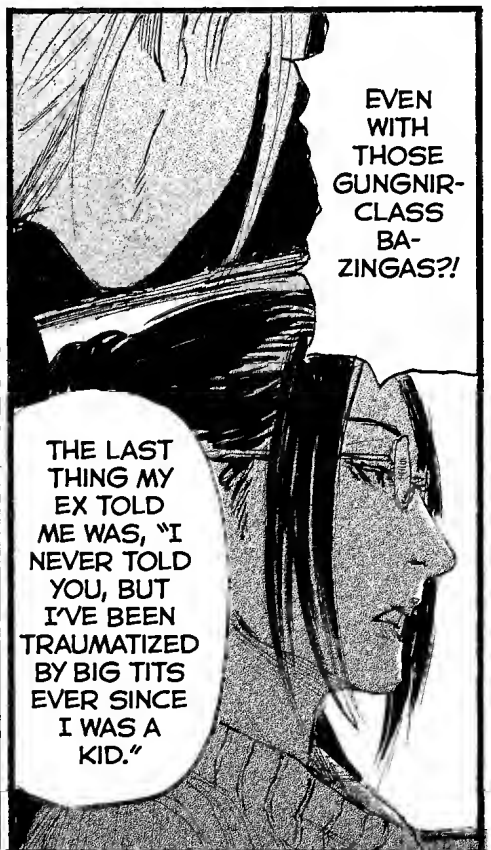
I WOULDN'T SUGGEST STOPPING THERE. BEARS HAVE TAKEN UP RESI-DENCE.
OH, THAT... THERE USED TO BE A 1,000-YEAR OLD MONGOLIAN OAK TREE THERE, BUT THE HEAVY SNOW IN 2012 KNOCKED IT OVER.
HEY, IT SAYS THERE'S A MASSIVE TREE OVER THERE.

DO YOU SEE A LOT OF BROWN BEARS AROUND HERE?
THEIR PEAK SEASON STARTS AROUND NOW AND ENDS AT THE START OF NOVEMBER,
BUT THE VILLAGE SITE WE'RE HEADING MOSTLY HAS PAVED ROADS, SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY.
I HEAR THEIR WEAK POINT'S THEIR NOSE.
カ" RATL ケ
カ" RATL ケ


YOU DEFINITELY HAVE A BOYFRIEND, RIGHT, HOKAKUSHI-SAN?
DEFINITELY? I'M NOT SURE WHAT YOU'RE EXPECTING.
I'VE BEEN SINGLE EVER SINCE I GOT DUMPED THREE YEARS AGO.


...

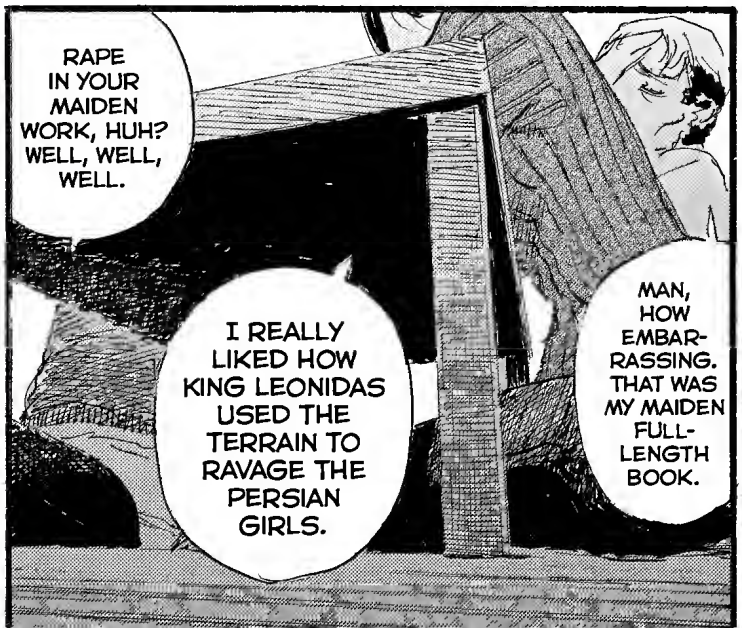
SORRY, MIZUHO. I SHOULDN'T HAVE ASKED...
WHY'D YOU PASS THE BALL TO ME?
OH, LOOK. A FOX.


EVEN WITH THOSE GUNGNIR-CLASS BA-ZINGAS?!
THE LAST THING MY EX TOLD ME WAS, "I NEVER TOLD YOU, BUT I'VE BEEN TRAUMATIZED BY BIG TITS EVER SINCE I WAS A KID."

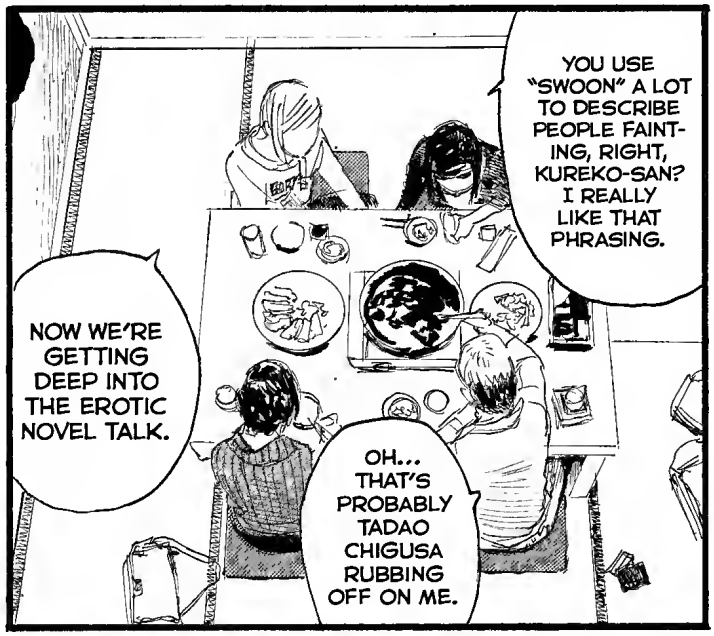
I DIDN'T GET TO SHOW YOU AROUND MUCH TODAY...
IT'S FINE. THE FIRST DAY'S MORE LIKE LOCATION HUNTING, ANYWAY.
THINK OF IT LIKE CHARGING UP FOR THE DAYS TO COME.
UHH. WE'RE CURRENTLY AT THE OLDEST *SUKIYAKI** RESTAURANT IN ASHIKAWA.

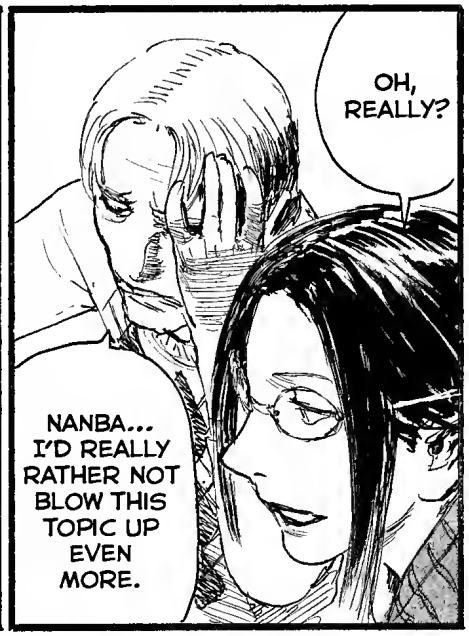
*SUKIYAKI: A JAPANESE DISH CONSISTING OF BEEF, VEGETABLES, AND OTHER INGREDIENTS SIMMERED IN A SOY SAUCE-BASED BROTH.

WHY IS OUR GUIDE JOINING US, YOU ASK?
BECAUSE APPARENTLY, SHE LIVES IN ASHIKAWA.
I READ CONTINENTAL PUBLISHING'S *300* WHEN I WAS IN SCHOOL.
NEVER HAD SOMEONE CALL ME "THE" BEFORE, BUT YEAH.
WHAT?!
YOU'RE *THE* HISAKI KURE, KUREKO-SAN?!

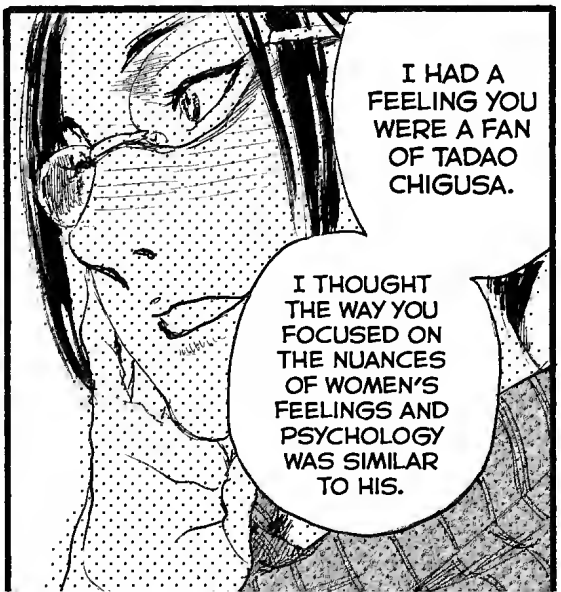

RAPE IN YOUR MAIDEN WORK, HUH? WELL, WELL, WELL.
I REALLY LIKED HOW KING LEONIDAS USED THE TERRAIN TO RAVAGE THE PERSIAN GIRLS.
MAN, HOW EMBARRASSING. THAT WAS MY MAIDEN FULL-LENGTH BOOK.

An avid reader, huh?
WELL, I'VE READ LIKE 15 OF HIS NOVELS!
THE BOOZE MIGHT BE GETTING TO HER...
MIZUHO DECIDES TO LOCK HORNS FROM AN UNEXPECTED ANGLE.
THUD!!


YOU USE "SWOON" A LOT TO DESCRIBE PEOPLE FAINTING, RIGHT, KUREKO-SAN? I REALLY LIKE THAT PHRASING.
NOW WE'RE GETTING DEEP INTO THE EROTIC NOVEL TALK.
OH... THAT'S PROBABLY TADAO CHIGUSA RUBBING OFF ON ME.


OH, REALLY?
NANBA... I'D REALLY RATHER NOT BLOW THIS TOPIC UP EVEN MORE.

HUH... YOU CAN TELL?
TRY USING EVEN A FRACTION OF THAT INTUITION ON REAL WOMAN!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "HUH, YOU CAN TELL"?!


I HAD A FEELING YOU WERE A FAN OF TADAO CHIGUSA.
I THOUGHT THE WAY YOU FOCUSED ON THE NUANCES OF WOMEN'S FEELINGS AND PSYCHOLOGY WAS SIMILAR TO HIS.

GIMME A BREAK. THAT WAS A THROWAWAY PIECE I WROTE OVER 20 YEARS AGO.
DIDN'T YOU WRITE A ONE-SHOT WHERE YOU LIKENED THE PRIVATES OF EVERY WOMAN YOU'VE SLEPT WITH TO CUTS OF BEEF?
KNOCK IT OFF! YOU'RE GONNA MAKE ME LOSE MY APPETITE!
10 PM, ASHIKAWA. BOTH THE CONVERSATION AND SWEATER CONTENTS ARE PACKED WITH MEAT.
THE WAITRESS STANDS SILENTLY IN THE AWKWARD ATMOSTPHERE.
WHAT CUT OF MEAT AM I, THEN?!
EVERYONE SEEMS TO HAVE FORGOTTEN THEIR JOB!
PREMIUM SKIRT STEAK, MAYBE?
HELL IF I KNOW...